

TO HISTORY / WHOM IT MAY CONCERN
A Letter from Allies of the Indigenous Silenced

One: War/Paint**

a short spoken word poem play
for reading performances

written
for 5 voices, or 1 to X*,
with \geq half = POC,
Indigenous preferred

written
for the Protest Plays Project's
Heal the Divide Initiative

written
on these pages, these white pages,
these slivers of souls of gone trees,
in Indigenous Blood Stories-as-ink

written
in the hope of opening eyes and efforts

written
in the hope of recognizing
Indigenous Silenced, past, present

written
in the hope of helping to inspire
positive healing urgent united actions
so we together can help un-write an
Indigenous Silenced, Future

by

Jaisey Bates

the-peoplehood.com

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For casts of < 5 or > 5, assign consecutive numbers (or random: i.e., pick them from a basket) and chronologically round robin The Numbers.

For the reading it is greatly preferred that The Numbers are situated in non-chronological / non clockwise, mixed order as this adds texture, dimension.

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The playwright has donated The Protest Plays' *Heal The Divide* commission fee for this piece to the New Native Theatre: newnativetheatre.org.

Notes:

At least half of cast is of color or mixed heritage, Indigenous preferred.

No Native in your group?

Outreach to Indigenous groups in your area.

Unsure where to go?

Playwright is happy to aid your efforts in creating Indigenous connections within your community.

'Staging' suggestion: a ceremony circle with The Numbers interspersed amongst audience.

In the center:

activities

(giving thanks to the Indigenous people of the ground on which you stand, an opening blessing, smudge, traditional dance/music, etc.)

and/or items

(i.e. a Pendleton blanket or star quilt with post-reading takeaways with info re: Native artists & organizations, and For Further Info and How You Can Help History Hear Indigenous Voices), created in collaboration with your Indigenous cast mates and community.

Suggestion re: The Honoring of Names.

The Numbers read the names as a basket with the names is handed round. So everyone including each audience member holds (carries the weight of, honors) the names, the stories, an instant.

No edits, revision, or altering of text.

No acting experience needed.

No 'acting', irony, mannered presentation, assumed accents, affectations, etc.

Simple open-hearted organic renderings, offerings, with the highest stakes: you have

one chance,
this chance,

this world of
words in which to

write to History
as Allies of

Indigenous
America.

May
History

at
last

Hear.

TO HISTORY / WHOM IT MAY CONCERN
A Letter from Allies of the Indigenous Silenced

One: War / Paint

We prepare to write.

ALL: TODAY

1: [speak day of week]

2: [speak month]

3: [speak day of month]

4: [speak year]

ALL: WE

5: of different heritages, of different paths come together

1: here on this Indigenous ground,

2: here on this contested,

3: conquered,

4: stolen land to

ALL: STAND

5: beside the indigenous Silenced.

ALL: WE

1: – a community –

2: take this moment to acknowledge,

3: honor and give thanks to

4: the ancestors of this land. Together

5: we gather our courage. Together

1: we raise our words,

2: we raise silenced words,

3: we raise our pen –

1: our offering –

2: over this shared page in our lives,

3: in this place, this shared

4: space of moments when we will

ALL: WRITE

5: here, together, as Allies of

1: the Indigenous Silenced – standing beside

2: the Indigenous Silenced –

3: this letter,

4: this song,

5: this prayer,

1: this plea to

ALL: HISTORY

2: To

3: Whom

4: It

5: May

1: Concern.

2: Here is our letter.

3: Here is our song.

4: May History

ALL: AT LAST

5: Hear.

We write.

ALL: WAR.

- 1: On December 26, 1862,
- 2: at President Abraham Lincoln's directive,
- 3: 38 Dakota men were hanged in Minnesota
- 4: before a thronging audience of thousands.

ALL: PAINT.

- 1: On May 26, 2017,
- 5: Minnesota's New Native Theatre, whose company of Indigenous artists had rehearsed long hours in preparation for this special
- 1: one
- 2: night
- 3: only
- 4: reading of a Native woman's play,
- 5: found their words, their art, their voices

ALL: SILENCED

- 5: before an empty room. They had no audience.
- 1: They had no audience because their would-be audience members
- 2: went instead to the Walker museum, compelled to express their collective
- 3: blood
- 4: memory
- 5: horror,
- 1: grief,
- 2: rage
- 3: at the unveiling of a new work in the sculpture garden:
- 4: a resurrecting

5: re-creation

1: representation of the

2: scaffold, the stage the U.S. government

3: specifically built to

ALL: SILENCE

4: 38 Dakota men before an audience of Americans,

5: a thronging crowd of thousands. A monumental

1: monstrous

2: tribute to and commemoration of the government's

3: official policy: Indigenous extermination.

4: Silencing. The stealing Indigenous lands,

5: languages, lives. Intended ... as 'art'.

1&3: (sotto voce) TakeItDown

2&4: (sotto voce) TakeItDown

1-4: (sotto voce) TakeItDown

5: Intended

1: as a place,

2: a safe and worthy space

3: for children

4: to play:

ALL: A PLACE.

ALL: FOR CHILDREN.

ALL: TO PLAY.

We honor. We remember.

5: An Honoring of Names. We stand beside the Indigenous Silenced. We bear them witness. We speak their names, their words. May History, at last, hear.

3: Taju-xa, Red Otter
Hinh-an-shoon-koyag-mani, Walks Clothed in an Owl's Tail

4: Tate kage, Wind Maker
Tate hdo dan, Wind Comes Back

5: Maza-bomidu, Iron Blower
Hapinkpa, Tip of the Horn

1: From Hdainyanka's letter to Chief Wabasha:

3: Sna-mani, Tinkling Walker
Hdaiyanke, Rattling Runner

1: "I have not killed"

4: Pazi kuta mani, Walks Prepared to Shoot
Tipi-hdo-niche, Forbids His Dwelling

1: "wounded"

5: Wahena

1: "or injured"

3: Henry Milord, a French mixed-blood

4: Hypolite Auge, a French mixed-blood

5: Baptiste Campbell, a French mixed-blood

1: "any white persons."

3: Xunka ska, White Dog

1: "I have not participated"

4: Nape shuha, Does Not Flee

- 1: "in the plunder of their property"
- 5: Dan Little, Chaska dan, a first son, We-chank-wash-ta-don-pee
- 1: "and yet to-day I am set apart for execution, and must die."
- 2: *The men take*
- 3: Wyata-tonwan, His People
- 2: *their assigned places*
- 4: Oyate tonwan, The Coming People
- 2: *on the scaffold.*
- 5: Mehu we mea, He Comes for Me
- 2: *They sing*
- 3: Dowan niye, The Singer
- 2: *a Dakota song. White hoods*
- 4: Chanka hdo, Near the Woods
- 2: *are pulled over their heads.*
- 1: "My wife"
- 2: *They grasp*
- 1: "is your daughter"
- 2: *each others hands.*
- 5: Cetan hunka, The Parent Hawk
- 1: "my children"
- 3: Hepan, a second son
- 4: Hepidan, a third son

- 1: "are your grandchildren."
- 5: Tunkan koyag I najin, Stands Clothed with His Grandfather
- 3: Tunkan icha ta mani, Walks With His Grandfather
- 2: *The crowd –*
- 1: "I leave them all"
- 2: *thousands –*
- 1: "in your care and under your protection."
- 2: *surges.*
- 1: "Do not let them suffer;"
- 2: *It raises*
- 1: "and when my children "
- 2: *its frenzied foreign voice.*
- 1: "are grown up"
- 4: Aichaga, To Grow Upon
- 1: "let them know that their father"
- 2: *A drum beat*
- 1: "died"
- 2: *sounds.*
- 5: Wakinyan na, Little Thunder
- 1: "without having the blood"
- 3: Wapa-duta, Scarlet Leaf
- 2: *An axe blow*

1: "of a white man"

4: Waxicun na, Little Whiteman

2: *severs the rope.*

1: "to answer for"

2: *The platform falls.*

5: Wakan tanka, Great Spirit

1: "to the Great Spirit."

2: *They dance in air.*

3: Had hin hda, To Make a Rattling Noise

1: "My children are your grandchildren."

4: Ite duta, Scarlet Face

2: *They die.*

5: Amdacha, Broken to Pieces

1: "I leave them all in your care"

2: *After a time their bodies are cut down.*

1: "and under your protection."

2: *They are buried in a shallow mass grave.*

1: "Do not let them suffer."

Beat.

2: *Before morning most of their bodies are dug up for doctors' use.*

Beat.

3: Ho tan inku, Voice Heard in Returning

4: Marpiya te najin, Stands on a Cloud

5: Maka te najin, Stands Upon Earth

We hold our letter to the sky.

1: Today,

2: together,

3: here,

4: now,

ALL: WE STAND

5: beside the Indigenous Silenced.

1: We raise our words, our voices, our pen

2: over this shared page in our lives,

3: in this place, this shared

4: space of moments

ALL: WE WRITE

5: here, together, as Allies of

1: the Indigenous Silenced – standing beside

2: the Indigenous Silenced –

3: this letter,

4: this song,

5: this prayer,

1: this plea to

ALL: HISTORY

2: To
 3: Whom
 4: It
 5: May
 1: Concern.

Beat.

2: From a Facebook post by Rhiana Yazzi,
 3: Founder of the New Native Theatre:
 4: “NOBODY came to our event tonight because our ENTIRE audience went to protest at the Walker instead of celebrating OUR own Native-made art right here.”
 5: “A perfect example of how our communities of color are forced over and over to defend our people and histories and to educate at the expense of celebrating our own vitality.”
 1: Here is our letter.
 2: Here is our song.
 3: We hold our voices to the sky.
 4: We stand here as Allies of the Indigenous Silenced
 5: we honor their voices
 1: until History, at last, hears.
 2: We must help History hear. Because:
 3: There’s a structure
 4: under construction
 5: for a couple centuries, in the garden that is our shared home.
 1: Its bones
 2: are broken treaties, endless oppressions. Stolen

3: lands, children, languages. Lives.

4: Its joints

5: are greased with blood.

1: It's rising up, monstrous. Ravenous.

2: It eats Indigenous voices.

3: Because:

4: This structure is a story.

5: Those in power wrote it. Built it.

1: Are writing it. Building it.

2: They call it History.

3: Because:

4: In these days of days if our home is to survive,

5: if we wish to work toward a world worthy of our children's bright promise, and of theirs,

1: we need to do more than watch as

2: History opens

3: its eyes. As

4: It opens

5: Its mouth.

Sunrise,

accept this offering.

Sunrise.

-- Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*